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## LEWIS AND CLARK AT THE MOUTH OF WOOD RIVER—AN HISTORIC SPOT.

CHARLES GILMER GRAY.

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A certain spot becomes famous by reason of its having been the birthplace or home of some great man, or the scene of some noted accomplishment. Thus, the world holds in honor the birthplace or home of a Gladstone, a Grant, a Lincoln; it makes its pilgrimages to a Bunker Hill, a Gettysburg, a Chickamauga; all celebrated battle-fields for freedom.

With this fact in view it may be truthfully said that there is a spot on Illinois soil, heretofore too much neglected, which should have public recognition as the place at which centered and from which started out an exploring expedition which opened up to civilization a territory of boundless extent and inconceivable riches.

This site is at the mouth of Wood river on the Illinois side opposite the mouth of the Missouri at its entrance into the Mississippi river.

In the Lewis and Clark journals it is related that the expeditionary party under Lewis and Clark, to explore the then unknown country between the Mississippi river and the Pacific coast, gathered together in the fall and early winter of 1803 and spent the winter at the mouth of Wood river in preparation for the expedition which actually made the start May 14, 1804.

At this point then, on Illinois soil in early November, 1803, were gathered most of the men comprising the expeditionary party. The main body with Lieutenant Clark in command had come by boat from Pittsburg bringing with them the necessary stores. Captain Lewis having been necessarily detained, had come later by boat as far as the falls of the Ohio—the present Louisville, Ky., and thence by land, across southern Illinois via Kaskaskia and Cahokia, arriving in

December. It may be well here to show as briefly as possible what led to the sending out of the expedition.

Thomas Jefferson was now President of the United States, his administration having come into rule, March 4, 1801. For years he had been much interested in this unknown western country. In fact, once or twice he had joined in a private way, in plans to gain further knowledge concerning it, but nothing of value had come of either venture. But now, since he was president there were added reasons why a fuller knowledge of this country should be had, and his position the better enabled him to carry them into execution.

In a message to Congress with date January 18, 1803, Jefferson proposed, that a party of ten or twelve chosen men under an intelligent officer be sent into this country, even as far as the western ocean, with view to the establishment of trading posts for opening up commerce with this country. At his request, Congress made a small appropriation towards carrying out the plan. So, it came about—the appropriation having been made, that the expedition—the most important in its results of any in American history, was really to be made.

Later, as the idea grew in the public mind, and its importance became more evident, the expedition was planned on a larger scale with broadened objects and a larger number of men to assist in their attainment, the added expense being covered by a larger appropriation.

And right here, it may be well to take a glance at some things that were happening in Europe since these happenings were to have so much to do with the forwarding of President Jefferson's plans—both for gaining an outlet via the Mississippi to the sea and the starting forward of the exploring party to the ocean.

Napoleon Bonaparte with his victorious armies had at this time overrun almost the whole of Europe, and was looking for a wider field for his ambitious designs; so, for a time he had dreams of further conquests in America. From the time of La Salle to 1763, France had been the predominant

figure in America, but with the fall of Quebec in that year, the sceptre had fallen into other hands. Napoleon's ambition was to regain America for France. He conceived that he could easily gain a foothold at the mouth of the Mississippi from the Spanish, either by purchase or force of arms, then, could make conquest of further Spanish territory at his pleasure. This accomplished, he could by force if necessary, gain more territory from the United States up the river and into the interior.

Such were his dreams, and he was making considerable headway in turning his dreams into realities. History records that in 1801 by secret treaty he actually did make purchase from Spain of the Louisiana province, thus gaining much more than a foothold at the mouth of the Mississippi, and was making further plans to carry out his schemes; but, his plans were brought to a sudden halt, as will appear a little later.

About this time there was much unrest among the settlers of the Kentucky and Tennessee regions caused by the purchase of the Louisiana province by France and the outlet to the sea by way of the Mississippi passing into their hands.

With a view to gain for this southwestern country this outlet to the sea, Congress had placed the sum of two million dollars at the disposal of President Jefferson, for the purchase from France of New Orleans and lands lying along the Mississippi river to its mouth, and our envoy at Paris, Robert Livingston, had for months been trying but with scant success, to close the deal. Seeing how difficult it was, President Jefferson had sent James Monroe as a special envoy to assist in the negotiations. He arrived in Paris just at the time when Napoleon's plans had been brought to a sudden halt.

Just at this point, much to the surprise of our envoys, Livingston and Monroe, the astonishing proposition was put up to them by the French envoy, Marbois, not only to purchase New Orleans and close lying lands for two million dollars as had been proposed; but the entire province of Louisiana for fifteen millions; and the proposition was for prompt acceptance.

There was no ocean cable in those days, and travel by sea was slow. Without authority of either the President or Congress, or without any means of advising with either, it was up to our envoys to accept or reject. They like brave men and true patriots, accepted.

This sudden change in policy on the part of the French was made plain sometime later, and was this—at this time a war between France and England became a certainty. Napoleon realized he must centralize all his forces on European soil; also he must have money to carry on the wars with England and other enemies. These considerations brought him to a quick decision to sell to the United States, not only New Orleans and the small strip of land reaching to the gulf, but all the Louisiana province which he had recently acquired from Spain. Having reached this conclusion he gave specific instructions to his minister of finance, Marbois, to negotiate the affair with the envoys of the United States closing with the remark, “I require a great deal of money for the war.” Not only had Marbois advised against this, but his two brothers, Joseph and Lucien as well, all without avail.

Of the importance of these two events, the exploring expedition and the purchase of the Louisiana province, Henry Adams, a very conservative historian says, “Jefferson is chiefly remembered as the author of the Declaration of Independence; but he was also a leading figure in two later affairs, which as the years pass seem destined to contribute almost equally to his fame. These were the purchase of Louisiana province and its later exploration by Lewis and Clark; the one consummated, the other initiated in 1803.”

The importance of these two deeds is shown more in detail when it is borne in mind that by the one, the United States doubled its extent as to land—adding what later was made into fifteen states, and by the other gained a fuller knowledge of these possessions. These two acts of Jefferson were so truly his as to conception and execution, and so closely related, that it is difficult to consider them separately. It seems truer to fact to consider each as part of a well rounded whole.

When word of the Louisiana purchase came to Jefferson he was overwhelmed with fear—in the first place as to its constitutionality, for he was a strict constructionist, and in the second place, what would the people generally think of spending so much money in the purchase of such a vast territory of which so little was known.

This brought it about that the President became more and more convinced of the necessity of the proposed exploration and arranged that it should be organized on a larger scale with enlarged facilities for gaining all available information; and thus it came about that instead of ten or twelve under a competent leader, the expedition consisted of forty-three men, with two competent leaders—Captain Meriwether Lewis and William Clark; and at this time, early in December, 1803, all were gathered together here on Illinois soil at the mouth of Wood river to spend the winter preparatory to starting on the expedition early in the Spring.

There is very little written to tell how the winter was spent. The Lewis and Clark journals say, "That on account of the objections of the Spanish Governor, to their passing the winter at LaChaurette the highest settlement on the Missouri river as had been intended they had encamped at the mouth of Wood river, on the eastern side of the Mississippi out of his jurisdiction where they passed the winter in disciplining the men, and making necessary preparations for setting out early in the spring."

But, though so little is written as to details of the army life there, interest attaches to everything connected with the coming together of these men ready to carry forward this undertaking of so much importance in the country's history, the boats they came in and were to use in the trip up the Missouri, the stores they brought with them, for their own use and to gain favor of the Indians through whose country they were to pass, and the men themselves, all these are of interest and of these something has been written.

The boats, three in number, had been made at Pittsburg and had been used to bring the men down the Ohio and up the

Mississippi, striking many a sand bar and having to be pulled off more than once by a friendly ox team along the shore. One was a keel boat or bateau, fifty-five feet long, twelve feet wide, and drawing three feet of water. It had a square sail, twenty oars, and for protection in case of attack had steel sheets at the sides which could be raised or lowered as desired. The other two were of the periogue class, about twenty to twenty-five feet long, one with six oars, the other with seven. These boats were now all safely moored along the river's bank.

Then the stores they had brought along, well, they had flour, pork, meal, and such things for their subsistence, and it is stated they had whiskey, whether for their own use or other purposes is not told. There were seven bales of necessary stores. In these were quantities of clothing, working utensils, guns made under the supervision of Lewis at Lancaster, Pa., locks, flints, powder, ball and other such things. Then there were fourteen bales made up largely with merchandise for traffic with the Indians, and one box especially filled with an assortment of things intended as presents for Indian chiefs, such as richly laced coats, medals, knives, tomahawks, flags, fish hooks, awls, etc., for the men, and beads, looking-glasses, handkerchiefs, paints for the face, etc., for the women, all together making quite a variety to be carried on such a journey. In packing the bales a proportion of each set of articles was placed in each to guard against entire loss of any one article.

Of the medals mentioned above there were three grades: Number one was a medal  $2\frac{1}{8}$  inches in diameter with impression of President Jefferson on face side and on reverse clasped hands covering crossed pipe of peace and battle-axe, with legend "peace and friendship." These were to be used to gain favor with the chiefs. Number two represented some domestic animal; number three a farmer sowing grain.

But of most interest are the men themselves encamped there during this winter of 1803-4. From Jefferson's papers we find that great care was taken in the composition of the expeditionary force. Men were chosen with fair intelligence and common sense, strong, healthy men, courageous, disposed to

get along together, willing to suffer hardship if needs be; men with such qualifications were the only ones considered for such an undertaking. Some were soldiers selected from the various posts, others from the frontiers selected for their peculiar fitness. It is said as many as one hundred were rejected in getting the required number of men. None were married. All those accepted were enlisted as soldiers in the army.

The company as now constituted and in camp, consisted of forty-three men besides the two officers, Lewis and Clark. Nine of these men were from Kentucky; fourteen had been taken from the regular army; two were French watermen; one was interpreter and hunter and a black servant of Lieutenant Clark. Of these forty-three men, sixteen were to go only as far as Mandan Nation to help with the stores and to aid in repelling attacks from the Indians in the early stages of the journey.

And now as to the men themselves in camp there these winter months. The most prominent was, of course, Captain Meriwether Lewis, commanding the expedition, a Virginian of one of the best families of the state, both on his father's and mother's side; spent a few years in school, joined the militia and was soon transferred to the regular army; at twenty-three became captain and in 1801 at twenty-seven years of age, he became private secretary to President Jefferson. When the dreams of the exploring expedition was to become a reality, Lewis made a request of President Jefferson that he be appointed to lead, and the request was granted. In Jefferson's Memoirs, he himself writes of Lewis: "I now had opportunity of knowing him intimately; of courage undaunted, possessing a firmness and perseverance of purpose which nothing but impossibilities could divert from its direction; careful as a father of those committed to his charge, yet steady in maintenance of order and discipline, honest, disinterested, liberal, of sound understanding and a fidelity to truth so scrupulous that whatever he should report would be as certain as if seen by ourselves—with all these qualifications I could have no hesitation in confiding the enterprise to him." No higher praise could be given to anyone. Afterwards when the territory of



Louisiana was set up he was appointed first governor. Captain Lewis was in command at the encampment on Wood river during this winter of 1803-4.

It was concluded that there should be an associate leader to take command in case of death or disability of Captain Lewis, so William Clark, also a Virginian, a younger brother of General George Rogers Clark was selected. He was the ninth of a family of ten children. In early years he had removed with his family to the falls of the Ohio, the present Louisville, Ky. He was named as second in command and indeed only held the rank of first lieutenant in the army, though Captain Lewis always treated him as of equal rank with himself. He proved himself very efficient in all the affairs of the expedition, and showed special tact in his dealings with the Indians. He was later appointed Superintendent of Indian affairs in the western country with headquarters in St. Louis, Mo. Lieutenant Clark was in camp at Wood river during that winter.

Of the non-commissioned officers who passed the winter there, Sergeant Charles Floyd may be named first as being one of the nine young men from Kentucky. His was the only death which occurred during the entire course of the expedition. All efforts to relieve him were ineffectual and he was buried on top of a cliff with honors due to a brave soldier. A cedar post marked the site of the grave located near the present Sioux City, Ia. A traveler passing the spot in 1855 writes that the post had been cut away within a few inches of the ground by relic hunters. A monument now marks the spot erected jointly by Government, State, County and individual subscriptions, costing \$20,000 and rising 100 feet high.

Another one there was, George Drewer, a half-breed Indian, an interpreter, and famous during the whole journey as a mighty hunter as is shown by reciting some of his feats; sent in search of a deer, killed five, ran up against a very large bear, had to climb a tree to escape his talons, from which safe place he shot the brute. At another place was attacked by a savage bear, but at twenty paces shot him through

the heart. Here are several items copied from the Lewis and Clark Journals: "Drewer came back about noon with the skins of three deer and the flesh of one of the best of them." "Brought in three deer." "Had before evening killed seven elk." He was leader in several buffalo hunts in which many animals were killed. Also had adventures with Indians who snatched his rifle only getting it back after a ten mile chase."

The Lewis and Clark journals say of him "we should scarcely be able to subsist were it not for the expertness of this most excellent hunter," and Captain Lewis says of him "a man of much merit particularly for his knowledge."

John Coulter too was there. He was with the expedition in all its perils and hardships going and until reaching Mandan Village on the return, when he at his own request received his discharge with a testimonial of always performing his duty.

Then engaging with two trappers he went back into the wilds, where in the course of a couple of years he became a conspicuous figure in two important events—one, the discovery of what later became the Yellowstone National Park, with all its wonders; the other, a personal adventure with a party of the Crow Indians where he, his companion having been killed, after being riddled with arrows, was captured; and made a marvelous escape, after having been stripped to the skin for torture, by outrunning the savage pursuers and hiding under a raft in the river.

Then Alex Willard was there; noted in a different way from some others mentioned. He served through the entire expedition, married in 1807. Was in several later wars—against Tecumseh in 1811. Also Black Hawk war. Was the father of seven sons and five daughters; one son named for Lewis, another for Clark. The father of twelve children, fifty grandchildren and thirty great grandchildren, was a skilled gunsmith and blacksmith. Kept a journal of the expedition which was accidentally destroyed.

George Shannon too was there. During the expedition he was the subject of many adventures. Once lost for sixteen

days, after the fourth day having nothing to eat but roots and berries, and a rabbit killed by a piece of stick shot out of his gun, the balls having been exhausted long before. Was sent on various missions of importance by Captain Lewis. He was of a good protestant family—oldest of family. Wilson Shannon, later Governor of Ohio was the youngest.

George Shannon, when seventeen, ran away from home and meeting Captain Lewis on his way to St. Louis enlisted for the expedition. He is described as a fine looking young man, very graceful and a fine conversationalist. Afterwards graduated from Transylvania University, Lexington, Ky. Studied law graduating in same class as Sam Houston, was Judge of Circuit court for many years, dying in Palmyra, Mo., in 1836, where he was at that time holding court.

Peter Cruzette was there, an experienced waterman on the Missouri; was also noted as the fiddler of the party, and time and again was called on to entertain the visiting Indians of evenings when they called at the camp.

It seems probable too, it was he who shot Captain Lewis through the thigh when they were both out hunting elk, mistaking him, partly hidden in the bushes, for an elk.

So, too, was Richard Windsor there, who in passing along the edge of a precipice lost his foothold, and but for the coolness of Captain Lewis who heard his outcry, would have lost his life.

Then William Bratton was there, a gunsmith in early life and expert in the use of tools in the expedition—probably one of the blacksmiths so useful at Fort Mandan in making tomahawks and battle axes.

John Shields was there, another one of the nine Kentuckians, an artist in repairing guns and accoutrements; at Fort Mandan repairer of weapons and maker of battle axes. Was taken several times by Captain Lewis on special missions; once attacked by three white bears and only escaped by running down a steep precipice, injuring his knee in the act.

Then York was there, the body servant of Lieutenant Clark, an object of continual merriment, wonder and sometimes fear, among the Indians. They could not be made to believe black was his natural color. The grand chief of the Minnetarees inquired about York's being black, and on his being brought into his presence examined him closely, spit on his finger and rubbed his skin to wash off the paint. Not until the negro showed him his short kinky hair would he be persuaded he was not a white man painted. Another time they flocked around to see the monster. To amuse them he told them he had once been a wild animal and had been bought and tamed by his master, and then showed them feats of strength which made him appear still more terrible. On the return of the expedition to St. Louis, in appreciation of his services his master gave him his freedom.

In these few pages the thought has been to present as briefly as possible something of the reasons for the bringing together of this body of men, encamped at the mouth of Wood river on the Illinois side, something of the men themselves in Camp there, and something of the immense gain to our country by reason of the successful accomplishment of the aims of the expedition.

What has been written has to do with two very important events, closely associated, which taken together, Henry Adams claims, did as much to add to the fame of Thomas Jefferson as did the writing of the Declaration of Independence.

A monument—a broken shaft—was erected in Lewis county, Tenn., to the memory of Meriwether Lewis whose life came to an untimely end at the age of thirty-five while traveling from Natchez to Washington, D. C., on government business.

Also a monument was erected to Charles Floyd, the only member of the expedition who died during the entire two and one-half years. It would seem a most fitting thing to have a shaft erected at the mouth of Wood river by the State of Illinois or a suitable marker placed there by some of the patriotic organizations.

Such recognition would bestow as much honor upon the donors as upon the recipients.

This matter is commended to the attention of the Illinois State Historical Society or other patriotic societies of the state.

The Wood River neighborhood was a few years later the scene of an Indian massacre noted in the annals of early Illinois. On July 10, 1814, on what is now the southwest quarter of Section 5 in Wood River township, Madison county, in the forks of Wood River, Mrs. Rachael Reagan and her two children, two children of Captain Abel Moore and two children of William Moore were killed by a party of roving Indians.

The story of this dastardly murder of a woman and six children forms a sad but thrilling chapter in the history of border warfare.